Many parishes in the Episcopal Church in Connecticut and across the country are struggling to find ways to keep parishioners connected and engaged during this time of physical separation. Further exacerbating the problem, plate collections are nonexistent and pledge revenue has declined due to the in-person and ceremonial nature of plate & pledge giving. In a sample of 40 parishes in the Episcopal Church in Connecticut, many are live-streaming services yet few viewers are being prompted to continue fulfilling their pledge during the service or to make a one-time virtual “plate” offering, and many parishes do not have electronic giving capabilities. Even parishes with strong online giving programs have seen a decline in revenue. Nationwide, parishes and dioceses are beginning to respond to the revenue and separation challenges by:

This program seeks to work with parishes to establish virtual communities and improve their finances at the same time. Both are necessary steps to successfully navigating the challenges posed by physical distancing in our faith communities.

S.E.C.U.R.E PARTNERSHIP
To begin this work, the Episcopal Church in Connecticut has developed the SECURE PLAN for your consideration – a partnership between ECCT, CCS Fundraising, and participating parishes to assist in connecting parishioners with their parish during and beyond COVID-19, as well as opening channels for virtual and alternative pledge fulfillment. The SECURE program is a focused effort to provide real-time support in parallel with other diocesan recovery efforts including deferred payments of Property & Casualty and Revolving Loan Grants, COVID-19 Parish Relief Loans, and Church Pension Group Waivers. This program is not a campaign.

SECURE stands for: Support from ECCT and CCS; Evaluation and triage of parish pledging and communication capabilities; Connection to parishioners; Utilize Resources; and Engage the parish community.
BUILDING A CUSTOM, COLLABORATIVE MODEL
Parishes vary widely in online capabilities as well as what they are currently experiencing in terms of giving loss. The SECURE program will need to be flexible enough to meet parishes where they are, while clearly articulating the need for activity beyond the minimum passive appeal.

Interested parishes can schedule a meeting with CCS to create a customized plan for each parish at no cost to the parish. Customized plans will vary depending on each parish’s individual needs, but each parish can expect the following over the course of three to five weeks, beginning as soon as possible:

Support from the SECURE Team and ECCT
- Strategize together; lean on one another; share ideas via weekly webinars.

Evaluation of Parish Capabilities and Pledging Needs
- What are we doing now? What could we be doing better?

Connect with Parishioners
- Connect directly with a small group of parishioners. Work closely with parish leadership. Offer giving opportunities to recover pledging or support a rainy-day fund.

Utilize Resources
- The SECURE team will provide hands-on assistance with communications and virtual meetings, pledge tracking and benchmarking, and a Virtual Communications & Social Media Guide.

Engage Your Parish Community
- Find new ways to stay connected as one body of Christ, social-distanced only physically.

WHAT TO EXPECT
Following the kick-off webinars, each parish’s CCS SECURE team will work with clergy, wardens, and vestries over the course of four to five weeks and will provide the following:

- Two – three steps you can take each week to improve virtual communications and recover and increase pledging
- Regular progress reports
- Hands-on assistance with social media, communications, and virtual meeting set-up
- Virtual communications & social media guide
- Speaking points and training guides for outreach
- Pledge tracking and benchmarking
- Communications plan during and after the covid-19 crisis